

# Rock and roll vs rap

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Nowadays there's a so-called "war" going on between the fans of rock and rap music. In this essay the comparison on the history, sound and social impact of those two styles of music will be presented.

Rock and Roll in its various guises came from a fusion of musical cultures, and in turn its influence fed back to these cultures, a process of borrowings, influences and new ideas that continues to develop rock music. It had runaway success in the U. S. and quickly brought sanitised rhythm and blues influenced music to an international audience. Its success led to a dilution, as promoters were quick to attach the label to other commercial pop, and original stars such as Elvis Presley were diverted into ballads more in keeping with previous ideas of pop. The excitement and drive of the music was not forgotten, and there was a widening diversification of styles. Soon the American rock style began to influence other genres. Places like Southern California produced their own varieties of pop music, such as surf. Young adults and teenagers across the country were playing in amateur rock bands, laying the roots for local scenes which would pave the way for garage rock and the so-called San Francisco Sound. Rock has encountered several stages of development since the beginning of the 50s, and the tendencies in modern rock include alternative bands (Radiohead, Muse), so-called pop-rock (Blink-182, Green Day) and others (George-Warren 26).

Rap music in its widely recognized form appeared much later than rock and roll. The roots of hip hop music are in West African and African American music. Originally, early rappers of the 70s focused on introducing themselves and others in the audience (the origin of the still common practice of "shouting out" on hip hop records). These early performers often exceeded for

hours at a time, with some improvisation and a simple four-count beat, along with a basic chorus to allow the performer to gather his thoughts (such as "one, two, three, y'all, to the beat, y'all"). The 1980s saw intense diversification in hip hop, which developed into a more complex form. The simple tales of 1970s emcees were replaced by highly metaphoric lyrics rapping over complex, multi-layered beats. In the 90s, gangsta rap became mainstream, beginning in about 1992, with the release of Dr. Dre's *The Chronic*. This album established a style called G Funk, which soon came to dominate West Coast hip hop between 1993 and 1996. Beginning in 1997 with Bad Boy Records, hip hop (more commonly known as "rap") began to merge with teen pop, and by the turn of the millennium Eminem, Jay-Z, and Nelly were very popular. In 2002 50 Cent, a protege of Eminem, scored with the massive hit *In Da Club*, becoming the most popular rapper and continuing to be as of 2005 (*The Vibe History of Hip Hop* 23). Hip hop shows no sign of losing popularity and may continue to be popular well into the 21st Century.

As there are so many styles in rock it's hard to describe a general type of music or lyrics. Nevertheless, rock music usually is based on riffs (guitar-played tunes) and lyrics of certain meaning (concerning love, thoughts, feelings, drugs and so on). Rap music itself is composed of two parts, rapping, the delivery of swift, highly rhythmic and lyrical vocals, and DJing, the production of instrumentation either through sampling, instrumentation, turntablism or beatboxing. Lyrics usually deal with living in a ghetto, money, guns, women and drugs.

The impact rock and rap produce on society is great. Hip hop music is a part

of hip hop, a cultural movement that includes the activities of breakdancing and graffiti art, as well as associated slang, fashion and other elements. Contemporary hip hop fashion includes the wearing of baggy jeans slung low around the waist, gold or platinum chains and boots or a fresh pair of kicks, and bandanas. Because hip hop music almost always puts an emphasis on hyper-masculinity, its lyrics often reflect a homophobic mindset. Since the late nineties many hip hop songs have focused on the "bling bling" lifestyle, which is a focus on expensive jewelry, cars and clothing that symbolize wealth and status.

From its beginnings, rock and roll has been associated with youth, rebellion, and anti-establishment as well as with sex and drugs. The popularity and promotion of experimentation with drugs by musicians may have influenced use of drugs and the perception of acceptability of drug use among the youth of the period. Musicians continue to be fashion icons; pop-culture magazines such as Rolling Stone often include fashion layouts featuring musicians as models. Today's emo music scene is closely tied to a fashion movement in which fans and musicians often dye their hair black, adorn studded belts, add pins to pants and bags, and wear vintage clothing often from thrift shops (Henke 130).

It's hard to say for sure which style - rock or rap - is superior, but it's a fact that they've both made a significant contribution to the culture of modern time and should be respected for that.

References:

1. George-Warren, Holly et al. The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll. Fireside Press, 2001.

2. Henke, James et al. The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll : The Definitive History of the Most Important Artists and Their Music. Random House, 1992.

3. Vibe magazine. The Vibe History of Hip Hop. 1999.